

*U.S. Department of Justice*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Norfolk, Virginia** – Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced that a Norfolk federal grand jury indicted Helen Carr of Akron, Ohio, and charged her with participating in a fraudulent Internet scheme to steal credit card numbers and personal information from customers of America Online (AOL). Carr was previously arrested on a criminal complaint on August 5, 2003, and is on bond pending her arraignment in Norfolk, on September 10, 2003, at 9:00 a.m.

On August 28, 2003, a Norfolk federal grand jury returned a one-count indictment against Carr charging her with conspiracy to unlawfully possess 15 or more unauthorized access devices (credit cards). The maximum penalties provided by statute for this offense are five years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and the forfeiture of personal property used in the commission of the offense.

The indictment alleges that in 2001 and 2002, Carr and others used an Internet fraud technique known as "phishing," in which scam artists attempt to trick Internet users into divulging their credit card account numbers, screen names, passwords, and other personal information. As part of this scheme, the indictment alleges that Carr and other conspirators sent mass e-mails ("spam") to AOL subscribers throughout the United States purporting to be from AOL's Security Department. These e-mails informed the recipients that AOL's last attempt to bill their credit cards had failed and that they needed to supply updated information to AOL to avoid termination of their accounts. To do so, subscribers allegedly were directed to click on an enclosed link that re-directed them to a fake web page, entitled the "AOL Billing Center," which directed the subscribers to supply personal information about themselves and their accounts and to provide current and alternate credit card account numbers. This information, however, was then allegedly forwarded to free, web-based e-mail accounts set up by the conspirators, which Helen Carr and others allegedly accessed to obtain the victims' credit card numbers for their own use.

The investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Robert J. Krask is prosecuting the case.